



# Nebraska Resources

## Newsletter

Published Quarterly by the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources  
301 Centennial Mall / P.O. Box 94676 / Lincoln, NE 68509-4676

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### Agency Numbers to Remember

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## Nebraska Platte-Republican Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

by Gayle Starr

On March 19, 2005 Governor Heineman and Deputy Under Secretary of Agriculture Floyd Gaibler signed an agreement approving the State's application for a **Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)**. The agreement establishes the **Nebraska Platte-Republican Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program**. The CREP



is part of the CRP which was authorized in 1985 with the goal of establishing habitat cover on highly erodible cropland. While the CRP was established to enroll individual parcels of land the CREP is based on dealing with problems on an area basis. The Nebraska program is the first one of its kind in the nation. Other approved CREP areas, such as the one in Southeast Nebraska, have dealt with water quality and related environmental issues only.



The goals of the Nebraska Platte-Republican CREP are to **convert 100,000 acres of irrigated land to grass or similar habitat cover**, thereby significantly reducing the amount of irrigation water consumption, improving fish and wildlife habitat, and preventing agricultural chemicals and sediment from entering waters of the state. In exchange the landowner/operator would be paid an annual

payment, for a period of ten or fifteen years, that would approximate current irrigation rental rates. They would also receive financial assistance for the cost of establishing the habitat cover. The program will be administered by the Farm Services Agency of USDA (FSA) and the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (NDNR) will be responsible for the state level administration. The annual rental payments will be made by FSA and NDNR and FSA will each pay fifty percent of the cost of habitat establishment. The NDNR has committed to pay up to five million dollars for its share of habitat establishment costs. The federal cost over the contract period is estimated at 158 million dollars. Non-federal entities including state agencies, local NRDs and irrigation districts, and non-governmental organizations will provide in-kind matching which, along with the five million dollars from NDNR, must provide 20% of the total program costs.

*Continued on page 2*

The NDNR will enter into a **State Water Use Contract** with each participant that insures that the enrolled cropland will not be irrigated and that the water that was previously used for the enrolled acres is not applied to other lands or is diverted for other purposes.

**The eligible area includes approximately two and one-half miles on each side of the Republican River and its major tributaries, two miles on each side of the North Platte and Platte Rivers down to the Kearney Canal diversion, plus all project surface water areas along those river reaches.**

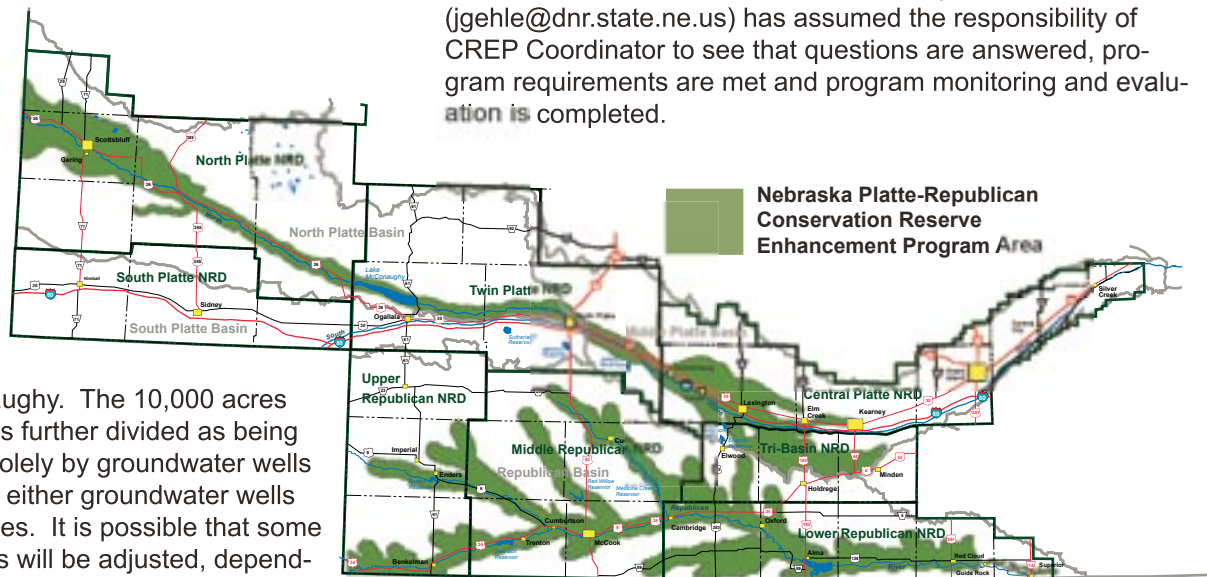
**The acreage goal for enrollment is 100,000 acres equally divided between the Platte and Republican River areas.**

For the Platte River Basin up to 40,000 acres may be enrolled below Lake McConaughy and 10,000 acres above Lake McConaughy. The 10,000 acres above Lake McConaughy is further divided as being up to 5,000 acres served solely by groundwater wells and 5,000 acres served by either groundwater wells and/or surface water sources. It is possible that some of these acreage limitations will be adjusted, depend-

ing upon sign ups in the various areas.

Interest in the program, especially in some areas, has been high with **applications for over forty thousand acres received**. Program sign up will be continuous until the acreage limitations are met. The only area with limited interest is in the Platte Basin below Lake McConaughy.

Verification of the information on each application has added a significant workload for the county FSA offices and the Department of Natural Resources. Jeremy Gehle at NDNR (jgehle@dnr.state.ne.us) has assumed the responsibility of CREP Coordinator to see that questions are answered, program requirements are met and program monitoring and evaluation is completed.



## Republican Basin Environmental Quality Incentives Program

by Gayle Starr

The **Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (NDNR)**, the **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)** and the **Natural Resources Districts in the Republican Basin** are partnering on an innovative practice as part of the NRCS administered **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)** to reduce irrigated cropland acres and water use in the basin. The **"Nebraska Ground and Surface Water Special Incentives"** practice is targeted to the Republican Basin because of the water supply issues in that basin and the need to meet the requirements of the Republican River Compact. Landowners who **voluntarily** enroll in the program **cannot irrigate the enrolled acres**, but may raise crops under dry land conditions. The practice, which was initiated in 2004, provides for federal payments of \$50 per acre for three years and requires the landowner/operator to not irrigate for four years. Only a very few acres (approximately 600) were enrolled in the program in 2004 because the NRCS payment was not considered adequate compensation. As a result the NDNR agreed to provide a **one time incentive payment of \$100 per acre this year** to attract more interest. This will result in the landowner/operator receiving \$250 for the four years. For 2005 NRCS has allocated \$1,500,000 to the program and NDNR has agreed to provide \$1,000,000, which will enroll a total of 10,000 acres. Initial program enrollment exceeded the 10,000 acre limitation. There are some **eligibility requirements**;

- Land must be enrolled in the federal EQIP program and be eligible for federal program participation.
- A maximum of 160 acres and a minimum of 15 acres must be enrolled.
- Land must have been irrigated 2 of the last 5 years.
- At least 50% of the land enrolled must be in the "quick response area" (approximately 2.5 miles on each side of the main stem and major tributaries).
- Water saved cannot be used or transferred to any other lands.
- Irrigation District surface water users must assure that the district will not allocate the water saved to other lands.
- Lands irrigated with groundwater and enrolled in the program must be certified with and be in compliance with the rules and regulations of the Natural Resources District.

*Continued on page 3*

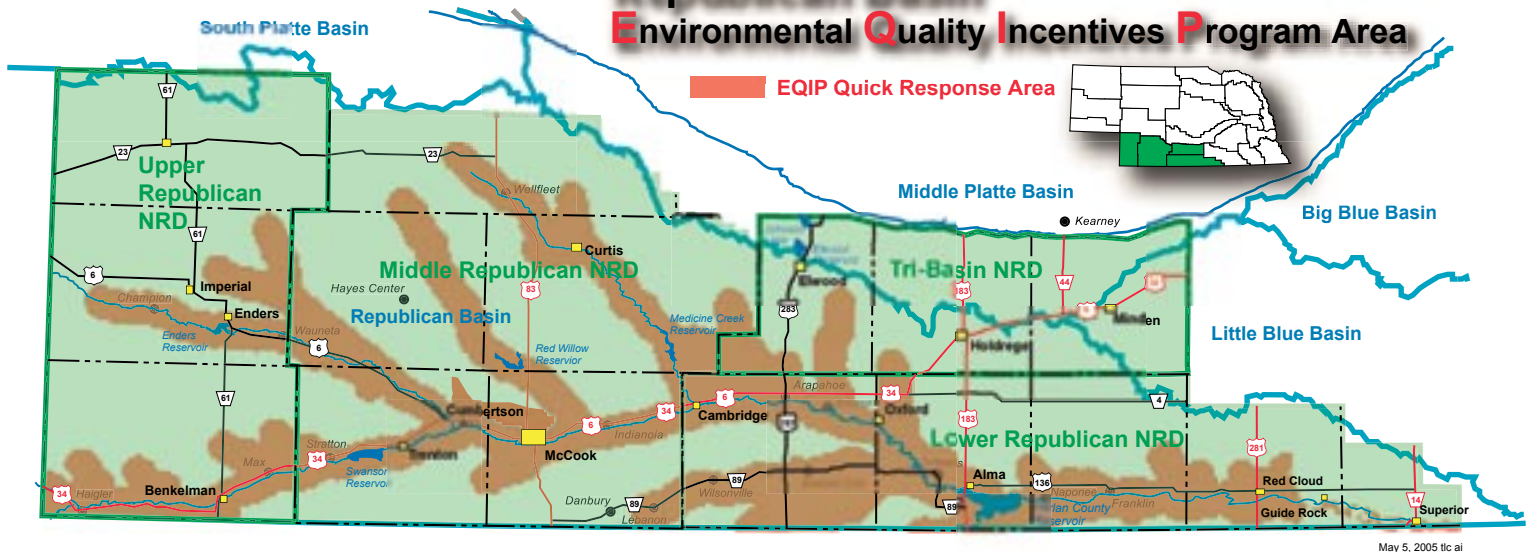


Republican Basin EQIP continued from page 2

This program is not a permanent solution to meeting the terms of the Republican River compact, but is a partial means of initially meeting the required reductions. It also serves to soften the

impact on individual irrigators who are dealing with the ravages of a multi-year drought. Once the drought ends and the additional "water short years" restrictions are over, this program will not be needed.

## Republican Basin Environmental Quality Incentives Program Area

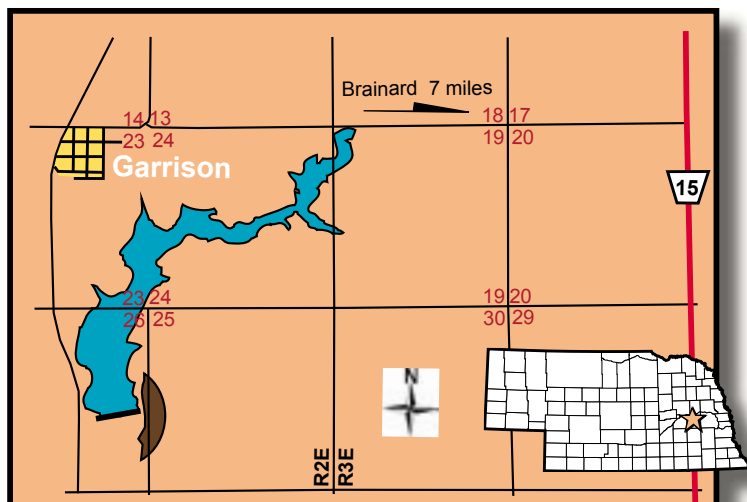


## Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Fund Update

The **Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Fund** was established in 1977 to provide state financial assistance to Nebraska landowners installing approved soil and water conservation measures. Since 1977 the State of Nebraska has provided over **\$71 Million** in state cost-share assistance to Nebraska landowners. The fund is administered at the state level by the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources and is coordinated by the state's 23 natural resources districts at the local level with technical assistance provided by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. For additional information on the Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Fund, contact the **Nebraska Department of Natural Resources** or your local natural resources district.

Approved Soil and Water Conservation Practices	Program Accomplishments in 2004	Total Program Accomplishments 1977-2004
Terraces.....	150 miles	11,423 miles
Terrace Underground Outlets.....	203,942 feet	5,020,559 feet
Water Impoundment Dams.....	11	1,315
Grade Stabilization Structures.....	15	688
Irrigation Tailwater Recovery Pits.....	5	866
Diversions.....	21,797 cu. yds.	1,586,291 cu.yds.
Grassed Waterways.....	58 acres	13,764 acres
Water and Sediment Control Basins.....	17	563
Dugouts for Livestock Water.....	14	649
Pasture or Range Seeding.....	3,758 acres	56,453 acres
Critical Area Plantings-Grass.....	31 acres	1,344 acres
Windbreaks.....	843 acres	38,471 acres
Windbreak Renovations.....	10 acres	3,747 acres
Irrigation Return Pipe.....	1,840 feet	547,322 feet
Planned Grazing Systems.....	118,852 acres	3,390,723 acres
*Irrigation Surge Valves.....	0	632
Irrigation Water Management.....	35,097 acres	260,548 acres
Repair of Practices.....	12	178
Stream Bank Stabilization.....	0	3
**Republican Basin GW Meter Program.....	0 meters	1,713 meters
**Republican Basin SW Meter Program.....	0 meters	82 meters
Republican Basin Water Meter Program.....	1,978 meters	4,180 meters
Water Mgt. Area Water Meter Program.....	55 meters	498 meters
<b>TOTAL DOLLARS</b>	<b>\$3,367,926.00</b>	<b>\$71,075,825.00</b>
<i>* Rescinded as separate practice effective 7-1-94</i>		<i>February 2005</i>
<i>** These practices not used after 7-1-2001</i>		

Figures are rounded to the full unit



# 2

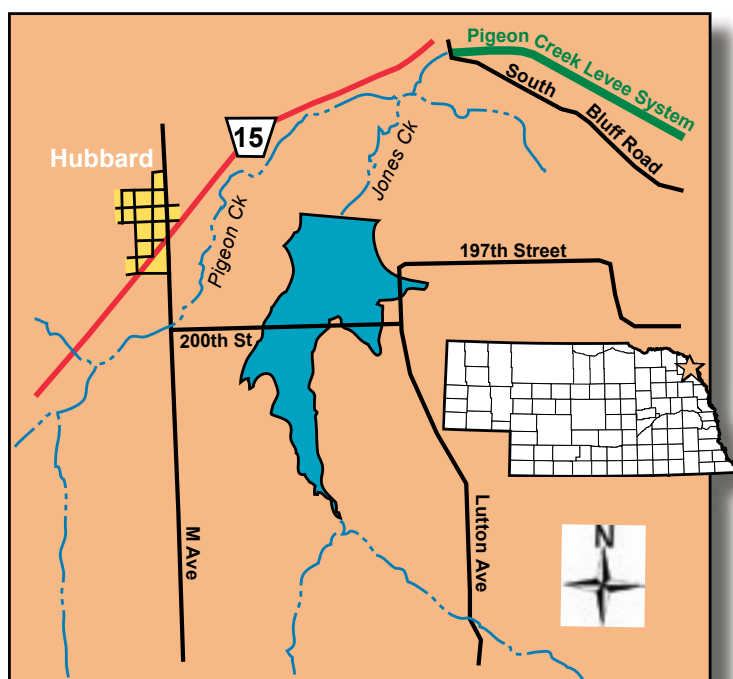
## Multi-Purpose Reservoir Projects Proposed

by Tom Pesek

At its January 26, 2005, meeting, the Natural Resources Commission was briefed on two new project proposals that involve multi-purpose reservoirs. The **Upper Big Blue NRD is sponsoring the Kezan Creek Project** which would result in a 237-acre reservoir just south of Garrison in central Butler County. Fishing, hunting, RV and tent camping, hiking, and picnicking are envisioned at the site. **The NRD has requested a Nebraska Resources Development Fund grant of \$3,048,500 for the project.**

The **Papio-Missouri River NRD is sponsoring the Pigeon/Jones Creek Site 15 Project** near Hubbard in Dakota County. The resulting 200-acre reservoir would provide fishing, picnicking, RV and tent camping along with hiking. An equestrian trail and mountain-biking trails are also planned. **The NRD has requested a Nebraska Resources Development Fund grant of \$5,325,000 for the project.**

Both project proposals are currently being reviewed by DNR staff and other state agencies, namely the Department of Roads, the Game and Parks Commission, the Department of Environmental Quality, and the State Historical Society. Action to allow the sponsors to conduct feasibility studies is expected at the Commission's March 23-24 meeting in Columbus.

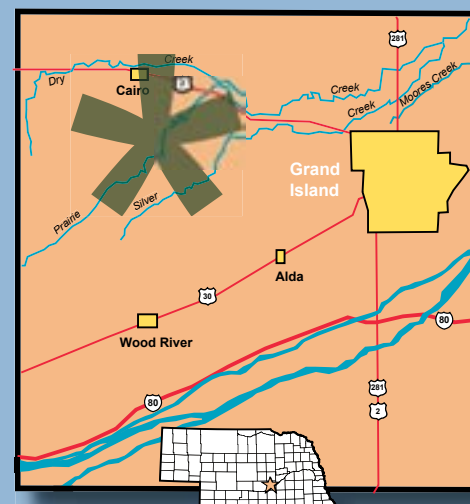


## Upper Prairie/Silver/Moores Creek Project Approved

by Tom Pesek

At its November 18, 2004, meeting, the Natural Resources Commission approved state funding assistance through the **Nebraska Resources Development Fund** for the **Upper Prairie/Silver/Moores Creek Project** near Grand Island. The Commission approved **a grant of \$8,633,502.68 or 52.5% of the total project cost of \$16,444,767.** The Central Platte NRD, the project sponsor, the City of Grand Island, and Hall and Merrick Counties will share the remainder of project costs.

This flood control project, which consists of dry dams, large detention basins, channel improvement work and a diversion channel, will help protect the western and northwestern areas of Grand Island from future flooding. The project will also significantly reduce the portion of Grand Island within the designated 100-year flood plain. Construction of the project will be phased over approximately 10 years.



# Groundwater Development in Nebraska

## Where and When

With the passage and implementation of LB 962, new water development in areas of the state that have been designated “over appropriated” and/or “fully appropriated” will experience immediate stays on new uses of groundwater and surface water. Those stays will remain in effect until an integrated management plan (IMPs) for the area has been developed and implemented. By statute, a key goal for the IMPs will be to manage all hydrologically connected groundwater and surface water for the purpose of sustaining and achieving a balance between water use and water supplies in those areas. The charts on this page attempt to show where groundwater development has occurred over the past years in Nebraska.



New Irrigation Wells per Year 1993-2004  
(by well completion year)

		New Irr Wells by NRD 93-04	New Irrigation Wells per Year 1993-2004											
			1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Natural Resources District	Central Platte	1507	51	73	97	126	107	85	52	79	112	192	291	242
	Lewis & Clark	195	3	5	7	16	19	21	14	19	16	11	20	44
	Little Blue	806	43	37	48	85	73	71	46	58	67	56	108	114
	Lower Big Blue	275	10	9	21	22	22	16	11	29	26	12	45	52
	Lower Elkhorn	899	26	37	52	95	93	80	44	63	38	64	141	166
	Lower Loup	1202	30	36	69	115	95	95	40	92	95	117	229	189
	Lower Niobrara	294	11	11	14	15	36	36	3	17	12	22	54	63
	Lower Platte North	581	22	25	42	100	41	43	20	34	22	54	94	84
	Lower Platte South	73	0	6	3	7	13	4	7	3	11	4	8	7
	Lower Republican	875	23	33	73	70	137	75	47	46	53	242	14	62
	Middle Niobrara	68	3	4	1	3	2	2	0	6	6	4	21	16
	Middle Republican	431	17	15	19	48	81	69	32	25	53	71	1*	0
	Nemaha	72	2	5	2	2	3	2	0	7	13	15	9	12
	North Platte	569	37	50	30	40	47	37	32	47	28	112	108	1
	Papio-Missouri River	163	1	9	16	13	17	14	26	17	12	11	12	15
	South Platte	204	8	17	10	16	14	11	9	14	17	33	25	30
	Tri-Basin	704	32	34	46	55	47	54	17	21	30	49	95	224
	Twin Platte	674	21	23	29	54	43	27	26	48	56	77	123	147
	Upper Big Blue	1158	55	60	88	162	90	55	54	60	72	93	179	190
	Upper Elkhorn	533	23	26	19	40	61	64	18	38	29	43	76	96
	Upper Loup	53	5	2	0	3	3	2	1	2	6	4	17	8
	Upper Niobrara-White	296	17	22	19	14	14	22	8	15	14	32	77	42
	Upper Republican	50	9	3	4	12	15	1	3	3	0	0	0	0
Total		11682	449	542	709	1113	1073	866	510	743	788	1317	1747	1804
		Total Wells per/year												

\* football field

lit 05.a

\* football field

tlc 05.01

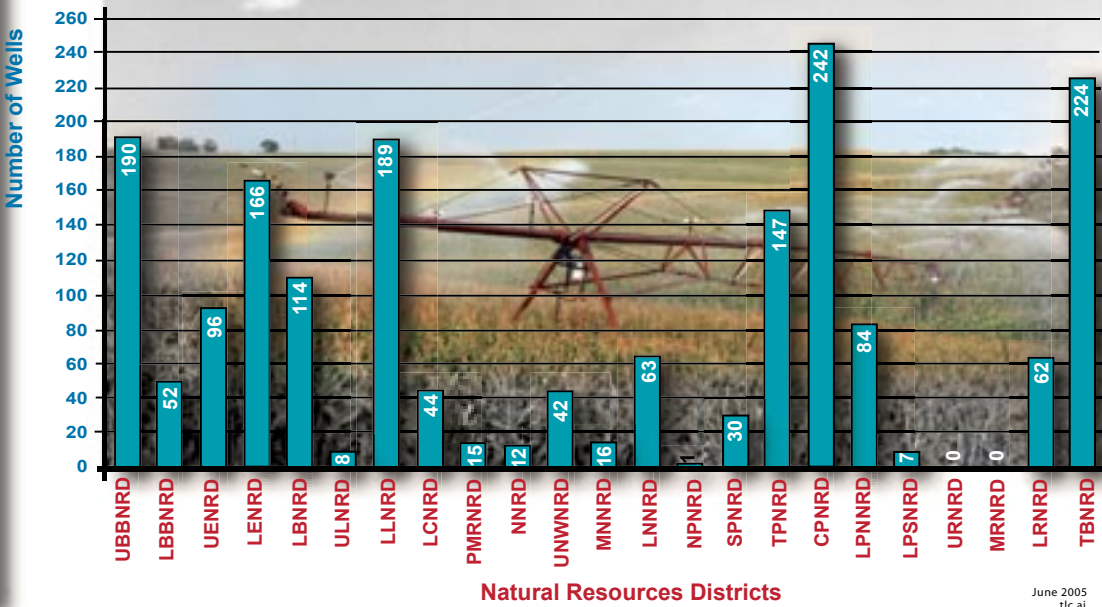
### Nebraska Natural Resources Districts



- UBB-Upper Big Blue
- LBB-Lower Big Blue
- UE-Upper Elkhorn
- LE-Lower Elkhorn
- LB-Little Blue
- UL-Upper Loup
- LL-Lower Loup
- LC-Lewis & Clark
- PMR-Papio Missouri River
- N-Nemaha
- UNW-Upper Niobrara-White
- MN-Middle Niobrara
- LN-Lower Niobrara
- NP-North Platte
- SP-South Platte
- TP-Twin Platte
- CP-Central Platte
- LPN-Lower Platte North
- LPS-Lower Platte South
- UR-Upper Republican
- MR-Middle Republican
- LR-Lower Republican
- TB-Tri-Basin

New Irrigation Wells from 1993-2004 by Natural Resources District

New Irrigation Wells in 2004 by Natural Resources District



June 2005  
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## State of Nebraska

Dave Heineman, Governor

## Nebraska

### Department of Natural Resources

Roger K. Patterson, Director

The Nebraska Resources is a quarterly publication of the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources and is edited by Terry L. Cartwright, Public Information. Your comments and or suggestions are welcomed.



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## Director Named MPCC Alumni of the Year for 2005

Director of Natural Resources, Roger K. Patterson, was selected as Mid-Plains Community College's Alumni of the Year for 2005. He was nominated by MPCC Board of Governors members Kent Miller and Dale Wahlgren, and was the unanimous choice by Dr. Michael R. Chipps, MPCC President, and the Mid-Plains Community College Cabinet.

Patterson was born and raised in rural Frontier County, received his associate's degree from McCook Community College and is also a graduate of the University of Nebraska with degrees in civil and sanitary engineering.

**Nebraska Department of Natural Resources....**

....dedicated to the sustainable use and proper management of the State's natural resources.